# French explorers' expeditions in Central Asia

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### **ABSTRACT**

This article highlights in detail the journey of the French explorer Henry Moser to Central Asia. In particular, the it reflects data on socio-economic and cultural life of the researcher in Tashkent, Samarkand, Bukhara and Khiva regions. It also focuses on the irrigation system of Turkestan region, provides a brief hindsight analysis of the irrigation system since ancient times - the end of the XIX century.

**Keywords:** Central Asia, Turkestan, Tashkent, Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva, travel, irrigation system, research, history, ethnography, culture, religion, art.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

History of travel is a fascinating historical source of learning. These types of resources and literature attract not only the academic community, but also the general public. Such works have been recognized as a primary source for collecting historical events and processes.

In the beginning of XIX–XX centuries many German, French and English tourists visited our country. Their notes, memoirs and scientific works provide extensive data on the socio-economic life of that time. Europeans not only observed the region as tourists, but also led special scientific expeditions organized and financed by the French government.

The press of that time also evaluated the scientific researches of foreign explorers in the following way: "the Russian scientists have done the big work on studying of the Central Asian region, but foreign researchers have done considerable work in a direction of geography, history and other sciences "[2: 69-70]. Frankly speaking, full systematic works on Turkestan also belong to foreigners. Their scientific heritage, as well as works of Russian authors, basically did not have learning nature. Although works of some European scientists were not written in a compiling character, but foreigners skillfully noted some aspects which are not found in works of Russians.

Henry Moser (1844–1923) is of Swiss origin. However, in the period 1827–1848 he founded a watch factory in St. Petersburg and lived in Russia. Due to his financial possibilities Moser traveled to Central Asia four times – 1868-1869, 1870, 1883-1884, 1889-1890 [4: 214].

The results of his research were published in Paris in 1886, "A travers l'Asie Centrale. Impression de voyage" - "Throughout Central Asia. Travel impressions". At the beginning of the book he refers to himself as "la treversée du continent asiatique en entier" [1; 82], that is, as a researcher who "crossed the whole Asian continent".

The book was commissioned by the French Ministry of the Interior (book trade section) and contains 170 prints and over 100 paintings. The work is a memoir based on a traveler and personal impressions of the researcher. The largest resource, with 463 pages, consists of 16 sections. The separate chapters are devoted to the history of Uzbekistan. Socio-economic life, state administration, cultural processes and ethnographic data in Tashkent, Samarkand, Bukhara and Khiva were widely covered, and road maps were also included.

Moser has lived in St. Petersburg for many years. So he spoke Russian well. However, he was not a geodist, naturalist, archaeologist or philologist as an expert. Being well educated at a young age, Moser carefully studied Russian and European sources about Turkestan while preparing for his journey. If he did not have the natural features of observation and scientific training, no financial resources could help him gather enough information during his travels.

The details of the journey began with a departure from Orenburg - Kazalinsk - Uralsk - Tashkent - Samarkand - Miyangkol - Bukhara - Amudarya - Khiva - The Caspian Sea - Ashgabat - Tehran - Constantinople.

In the introduction, the author comments on the creation of the book: "Two years ago I had the idea to write a book that would summarize my travels. As a result of my travels in many countries, I was able to write several theses and articles. They were published in leading scientific journals. Today it was published as a book."

The Governor M.G. Chernyaev even expressed confidence in Moser's work and suggested that Vinyenshtein, sent by the Russian king, offered to accompany the mission from Tashkent to Bukhara. Impressed by this trip, Moser dedicated his work to the Governor-General as a symbol of respect, and the book presents his painting. He also thanked his friends who accompanied the author's expedition. The members of the expedition, Jules F. U. Jurgensen (Jules F. U. Jurgensen), advised on the work and helped in its publication. Evert van Maiden (M. Evert van Muyden) - Theo Zobrist (M.Théo Zobrist), a talented artist and photographer, who faithfully served as a secretary.

Description of historical events related to the geographical regions of the country in the work began with Chapter 3. Describing the land road from Kazalinsk to Tashkent, the author describes the biodiversity of nature as an image-of-art, based on such expressions as "during our journey between Orsk and Kazalinsk we crossed the Black Sand (sable noire), from the second half of the road to Tashkent - red sand (sable rouge), white sand (sable blanc) in the places adjacent to the Bukhara Gate" [9: 53].

The most actual economic issues of that time are described in the book as follows: "The economy of Turkestan is of prime importance. It is crucial to lay new routes and send Turkestan products to Russia. After the intervention in Tashkent, the capital of Central Asian economy, its trade relations with Russia increased. At the same time, Russian industrial goods have been adding to Turkestan markets or replacing British products from India"[9: 56]. However, at that time foreign trade was carried out exclusively by caravan, which averaged 25 versts per day. The cost of the trip was very high, and this slowed down the trade.

When describing the Tashkent markets, special attention is paid to its peculiarities: "Tashkent markets are one of the largest shopping centers in Central Asia. The "alley" of sarts is their markets. They do not go to the market for their needs, but mainly to spend a day among the public and take a walk. The Tashkent market is not only a place of trade, but also a workshop for all kinds of local crafts. Today a huge amount of metal raw materials for craftsmen comes from Russia "[5: 137-138].

As for the description of Bukhara, we can say that French sources recognize it as the center of Islamic religion under the names of "Noble Bukhara" - "Prestigious Bukhara" or "Bukhara Sheriff" (*Bukharai Sharif*). The expedition members who visited Bukhara personally visited Amir Muzaffar's reception. During the trip a lot of information was collected about the modern state, traditions, palace life and administration of Bukhara Emirate, the way of life of local residents. Speaking about the existing educational system, he describes it as follows: "Primary education starts at 5 years and lasts until 7-8 years. Students are introduced to the alphabet and learn to write. They then study small fragments from the Koran. Then they begin to study "Farzi-Ain" and "Chor kitob". Students who graduate from them will be enrolled in the madrasah" [10: 137-138]. Besides, the work widely covers the relations between the Russian government and the Emirate in the era of Emir Muzaffarkhan [2: 72-73].

After reading the source, it can be understood that he is not just a tourist, he can justify the information in the right places and in most cases as a specialist. However, there are also cases when some issues are misinterpreted. For example, on a political question such as the occupation of Turkestan by Russians, in a simple response style, the essence was given that "the Russians were trying to protect their territory from the invasion of the steppe inhabitants and penetrated into the interior of Central Asia. As it turned out, unwilling to reveal that these were aggressive wars, he points out that the assistance provided by the Russian government is the primary factor.

G. Moser reminds of interesting events from his travels and explains it in the following way: "I bought great horses from my Kyrgyz friends from 25 to 30 Sums, when I was in trouble. Later I sold them to Tashkent officers for a higher price. Nothing can motivate a person to develop new ideas like need" [9: 8]. But this way of making money for a living caused objections from Russian government.

Then the researcher went from Bukhara to Khiva. He studied and analyzed the socio-economic system in Khiva, the life of that period and the role of the Khiva elite in the world. He thoroughly studied the situation in the palace of Khiva khan and compared it with life in Bukhara emirate.

It is important to note that in describing the Central Asian region, Moser sees it as a more profitable and nomadic lifestyle. On the other hand, the population is divided into ethnic groups such as Tatars and Aryans. He said that the Kyrgyz (modern Kazakhs) are Turks, and the Tatars are Aryans. None of the researchers including Jirar de Rial, Bonvalo or any other scientist of that time had ever had such an opinion. At the end of the 19 th century, the study of the Aryan tribes began to develop, and many travelers referred to this issue.

As a result of the journey, a very valuable collection about the East was created. Later he handed it over to the Bern History Museum. He was in diplomatic relations with special associations in St. Petersburg, Vienna and Paris [4].

Another valuable work by G. Moser is "L'Irrigation en Asie Centrale: étude géographie et économique" - "The Irrigation System in Central Asia: A Study of Geography and Economics". This work, written as a result of his research in 1890, it is consist of a foreword and 6 chapters.

In the introduction to this work, G. Moser thanked his friends G.Kapyu (G.Capus), G.Kordie (H.Cordier), and his secretary, M.S. Anderson, who helped with the research. "My goal was to show that my years in Turkestan were not wasted. Its fruit is this edition. Time will tell what else will happen". [11: 4]

The author became acquainted with all the sources created in this field before writing the work, and then, having analyzed it, he started this research. From them it is possible to allocate Russian scientists [3] and foreign [6]. It means that the research carried out by the author shows that it consists of scientifically based opinions, instead of simply interests of the debutant. It is for this reason that deep reflections on the region's climate can be observed in his thoughts. For example, he assessed the origin of civilizations as follows: "Since ancient times, civilizations have been formed in areas where there is water, that is, on the banks of rivers. But there are civilizations that live for centuries, and others are rapidly degrading. At the same time water, soil and climate take an important place in this place. If humanity can work and grow a good harvest, the culture of this place has developed and expanded or vice versa" (11:9). From the author's point of view, where water and soil are fertile, this land has always been a model of culture for centuries. At the same time, the dominant position of the irrigation system is undoubtedly taken by the author's attention.

According to the assessment of climate and soil in Turkestan, Moser describes its characteristics as follows: "In North Asia, Europe and America, local plant yields are also poor due to the unfavorable climate. Hunting and fishing are better developed than agriculture. The soil is fertile, especially in the Central Asian regions of Turkestan. Another major factor in high yields is the moderation of temperature and the abundance of irrigation water from different natural breeds. Thus, according to the researcher, there are natural barriers to increasing yields in Northern Asia, Europe and America that cannot be removed. That's why these regions are hinting at how much nature brings, so we have to be content. And in Turkestan, there is no room left for conditions, to eliminate deficiencies in the climate. Even in connection with the fact that there is no need to influence the nature, it is assumed that the yield will be provided on the basis of high quality seeds and normal irrigation.

The work presents the soil and climate of the Central Asian region, which describes the criteria for differentiation of the centers of civilization, steppes and deserts. The geological study of the region also has its own characteristics. For example, the following is a distinction between desert and steppe zones - Central Asia has no desert areas. There is no dry desert zone. A certain sense of vegetation can be found in any desert. Even in Kyzylkum and Karakum grows well distributed haloxylon (Halimodendron). Different features of the desert from the steppe zone are determined by its mineralogy, petrography and subsoil variations. The desert climate is characterized by a very dry atmosphere and lack of moisture.

The soil features of Central Asia, vegetation system, temperature and wind speed are also analyzed. There are also irrigation systems of ancient Sogdiana, Margiana, Bactria and Merv, ancient canals of the Amu Darya and moats near the Syr Darya. The main directions of irrigation systems in Central Asia, such as rains and waterfalls, are highlighted and emphasize the practice of management and organization of irrigation systems. At the same time, irrigation systems in the Zarafshan Valley and Bukhara Emirate are not overlooked by the author.

In his work G. Moser dedicated a separate paragraph to Turkestan orography [12] and hydrography [7]. The researcher also studied irrigation of the earliest periods in Turkestan - Sogdiana, Bactria and Margiana. Moreover, irrigation systems in China, America, Northern India and Egypt, which significantly influenced the history of irrigation systems and ancient civilizations, were compared with Turkestan's.

At the same time, Moser's research concerns the irrigation system in Zarafshan oasis and Bukhara Emirate. Suspended by the hydrography of the Zarafshan oasis, the irrigation system, filtration principles and dams in the canals are widely described.

## 2. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Moser's works are an important source for studying the socio-economic life, nature, climate and history of irrigation systems in the country. He describes and analyses irrigation systems, structures, methods and local traditions. In addition, the experience of developed countries in the world's irrigation system is studied and compared with the local system. Each region and system is treated separately with the clarification of the smallest details.

It should be noted that, although Moser was European, he tried to study the ancient state of the local irrigation system. His efforts lead us to find the earliest roots of buildings and irrigation systems that have changed over time. In addition, the study of French tourists and scientists is an important resource for supporting disciplines such as orography, hydrography, irrigation, mineralogy, geology, typography and toponymy of Central Asia.

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